CULTS HONORING RIZAL

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As an expression of nationalistic fervor, the Philippine Independent Church headed by the late Bishop Aglipay has canonized Rizal. Religious cults have risen in some parts of the archipelago in honor of the national hero. In the study, the author, a senior instructor of the humanities and history at De La Salle College,[35] describes the growth of these religious centers.

Introduction

It would be extremely difficult, if not well nigh impossible, to definitely ascertain the cult[36] in honor of Rizal that first came into being. However, as early as 1900, or two years before the actual establishment of the Philippine Independent Church, Isabelo de los Reyes, who was to be one of the founders of this sect, advocated what he called the "canonization" of the three martyr priests, Fathers José Burgos, Mariano Gómez, and Jacinto Zamora.[37] However, he made no mention whatsoever of a similar plan for Rizal. Yet as events turned out Rizal, together with the three priests, was canonized by this sect on September 24, 1903, or less than a year after the sect was founded.[38]

In his new status as a saint, a cult in Rizal's honor was established within the Philippine Independent Church. Novenas were composed in his honor, his statues found a revered niche in churches and chapels of this sect, his feast days marked with religious observances, and his name was given at baptism. As has been pointed out by no less an authority than the present Supreme Bishop of the sect, Mons. Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., Rizal's canonization was an expression of the "intensely nationalistic phase" of the development of the sect. That phase, de los Reyes has also added, is now a thing of the past. By this is also meant that Rizal is no longer considered a saint by this sect and, as such, cults in his honor within the sect are all but forgotten.

And yet, strangely enough, this did not deter other sects from being established, sects which consider Rizal not only a saint but a god, or at least, a being endowed with supernatural powers.

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[36] *Cult* also *Cultus*, broadly, honor to a thing or person. It thus includes worship and veneration. (*The Catholic Concise Encyclopedia*, p. 119). It is in this sense that this word shall be used in this study.

Sect, on the other hand shall be taken to mean that which is "commonly applied to a separately organized religious body having its distinctive name and its own places of worship; a "denomination" (*The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, p. 1827).

[37] *Vide* Isabelo de los Reyes, "A los tres martires de la Patria Burgos, Gomez y Zamora 28 de Febrero de 1872" in *Filipinas Ante Europa*, II, 9 (28 de Febrero de 1903), 67-78.

[38] For a discussion of Rizal's canonization by the Philippine Independent Church see our work, "The Canonization of Rizal" in *The Journal of History*, VIII, 2 (June 1960), 93-140; and "How Rizal Became a Saint" in Sunday Chronicle Magazine, XVI, 25 (June 18, 1961), 10-12.

As early as 1923, Katherine Mayo relates, a cult built around Rizal was established by the colorums[39] of Surigao. It appears that during 1923 and 1924 a tale was spread of the imminence of war which would first break in Surigao. "Then, after four months of fighting, Dr. Jose Rizal would arrive... in a large ship. In this ship he would embark all the faithful and would carry them triumphantly away to the island of Cebu. There they would celebrate victory in company of the Holy Child."[40]

Many believed this to be nothing but a sudden outburst of religious fanaticism which would soon pass away. But even as late as 1959, Fr. Richard Arens has also mentioned that the "Pulahanes of Camp Minarog (in Wright, Samar) believed that Rizal would return to life and that there would be a time when rich and poor would be alike."[41]

With regard to other sects and cults in honor of Rizal, Paulina Carolina Malay[42] makes the following observations:

> Many towns of Leyte among them Dulag, Burauen, and Limon have religious sects called Banal which venerate Rizal as a god. They have chapels where they pray on their knees before the hero's picture or statue.
>
> Legaspi City, too, has a strange society called Pantay-pantay whose members are called Rizalinos. Periodically the members walk barefoot in a procession to Rizal's monument and hold a queer sort of a mass. Usually this procession is done on Rizal Day (December 30) or on June 19, the natal day of the hero.
>
> Some 'colorum' sects also venerate Rizal as a god. A 'colorum' sect in Tayabas, Quezon has built a chapel for him at the foot of Bundok San Cristóbal, better known as Mt. Banahaw...

Vide also Isacio R. Rodriguez, *Gregorio Aglipay y los Origenes de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente (1898-1917)*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas MXMLX, I, pp. 302-308; Pedro S. de Achutegui and Miguel A. Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines: The Life and Church of Gregorio Aglipay 1860-1960*, Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1960, pp. 240-241; Salvador Pons y Torres "La Iglesia Filipina Independiente" (Manuscrito que se conserva en la Biblioteca de los Padres Agustinos de Valladolid) in Rodriguez, *op. cit* II, pp. 11-174. For the canonization of the Philippine heroes in Pons y Torres *vide* pp. 167-168 of the work just cited. *Vide* also Wenceslao E. Retana y Gamboa, *Vida y Escritos del Dr. Jose Rizal*. *Vide* pp. 452-453 of the edition of this work published in 1958 by the Nueva Era Press, Manila, in five volumes, xvi, 506p.

[39] Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear: The Truth about the Philippines*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c1925, p. 188.
"Secula Seculorum," the familiar but wholly incomprehended terminal words of many a Latin prayer, are held to have supplied the name for a sect widely spread among the islands .... For a considerable number of years the colorum sect has been known in the Islands in various places."

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[41] Richard Arens, "The Early Pulahan Movement in Samar and Leyte" in *The Journal of History*, VIII, 4 (December 1959), p. 346.
The Pulahans were members of a "very complex organized movement of the 'mountain people' who fought the Spanish and American governments. There are still some to be found in Samar and Leyte today. For a treatment of the subject, consult the work just cited.

[42] Paulina Carolina Malay, "Filipiniana: Rizal as a Saint" in *Weekly Women's Magazine*, III, 44 (March 5, 1954), p. 33.

> The sect called Rizalina in Barrio Caluluan, Concepción, Tarlac, has even a sort of nunnery for its priestesses. The girls, forbidden to marry during a certain period, are sent to Rizal's hometown, Calamba, for 'training.' When they go back to Tarlac, they perform masses, baptize and do other religious rites...

These sects in honor of Rizal found in various places of the archipelago, as shall be presently shown, have been established for some time now and, in some instances, may even be said to have flourished. And yet aside from passing mention of them in books and magazine articles, practically nothing has been written on them.[43] The reason for this may be two-fold: 1) either our scholars are still unaware of the existence of these cults or 2) if they are aware, they have not found them worthy of serious study. It is this writer's belief, however, that aside from making a modest contribution to our growing Rizaliana literature, a study such as this may also yield an aspect of Philippine culture which has reached such proportions as to stagger the imagination of social scientists. Furthermore, this writer hopes that the student of Philippine culture will find this study helpful in the acquisition of a view of a segment of religious movements in the country.

As has already been seen, there are other cults in honor of Rizal aside from those treated in this present study. In choosing the four sects for our study we were guided mainly by their accessibility. However, identical threads run through all of them and we feel that these sects chosen for our study are representative of the others. We hope that in our present study we have modestly succeeded in presenting a picture, however incomplete, of these movements.

Although an attempt has been made to make this study as comprehensive as is possible under the present circumstances, still we feel that this study is far from being complete. We hope, therefore, that other studies along these lines be undertaken in the future. Furthermore, we have not attempted here to approach the subject from the theological angle: we shall leave that to more qualified persons.

This study is divided into parts. The short introduction is an attempt to trace the origins of the cults in honor of Rizal. For this, we have drawn heavily from our study already cited. The second part attempts to trace the origins and the establishment of these cults, particularly the *Sambahang Rizal*, the *Bathalismo* (*Inang Mahiwaga*), the *Adamistas*, the *Watawat ng Lahi*, and the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*, their beliefs, religious practices and rituals, and their hierarchy. Except the *Bathalismo* (*Inang Mahiwaga*) and the *Watawat ng Lahi*, writings on the other sects are practically nil, we were left no alternative but to interview officials and leading members of these sects and, at least in one case, to observe some of their rituals. In discussing these sects, therefore, we have relied mainly on these interviews and observations. The third part is an attempt to determine the place of Rizal in these

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[43] Aside from the works already cited the following magazine articles may also be mentioned: Napoleon R. Gavina "Nueva Ecija's Religious Adamistas" in Kislap-Graphic (May 4, 1960), 16 and J.P. "Warawat ng Lahi" in Sunday Chronicle Magazine, XVI. 25 (August 13, 1961) 34-39. Although Gavina discusses the establishment of this sect, which is also a subject of this present study, its beliefs ad rituals he failed to mention Rizal's place within this sect aside from a scanty line: "The portrait of Dr. Jose Rizal adorns the altar of the Adamistas." Although J.P.'s article is mainly a pictorial coverage of the *Watawat ng Lahi*, it also contains a short historical account of the sect. However, J.P.'s allegation that Rizal is considered a "saint" by this sect does not tally with our findings. *Vide* pp. 192-194 of this present study.

sects. The fourth part is a summary of the salient points and conclusions derived from our study.

Sambahang Rizal[44]

Sambahang Rizal, literally, "Rizal Church," was established by the late Atty. Basilio Aromin[45] in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija in 1918.

Aromin told his followers that this sect was established to honor Rizal who was appointed by Bathala[46] to redeem his race and people and who, Christ-like, offered up his life in oblation to save mankind.

Beliefs

The beliefs of this sect may be summarized as follows.

God is known by the name "Bathala." At this point, it may be well to say something about the concept "Bathala." Historians who have studied the religions of the pre-Magellanic Philippines, among others, Morga, Chirino, and de los Reyes, have pointed out that "Bathala" is the term that the ancient Filipino used to designate "God," "Lord," "Master," or "Creator."

As early as 1586, Gonzales de Mendoza wrote in his book, *Historia de las cosas etc de China*, (Madrid, 1586) that the ancient Filipinos conserved idols of men and women and "among these they had the greater veneration for an idol whose name was *Batala*, which reverence they had taken as tradition."[47]

Morga, on the other hand, stated that "some (ancient Filipinos) adored a bird which was to be found in the mountains, which was yellow in color which they call *Bathala*." The well-known Jesuit historian, Chirino, (spelled by de los Reyes as "Quirino") has also written that "among the gods (of the Filipinos) there was a principal one and (who was) superior to all the rest whom the Tagalogs call *Bathala Meicapal*, that is to say, god the creator... The Tagalogs adored a blue bird, the size of a thrush, and they called it *Bathala*, which was among them the name of the divinity."

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[44] Actual research did not yield any printed matter about this sect which has since become extinct, although one is told of the presence of such printed matter some years ago. This set must have been registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission before the Second World War. However, the papers of incorporation must have been lost during the war as they are no longer to be found in the said office.

This discussion of the *Sambahang Rizal* is based on an interview of this writer with Nicolas Sumalbag, 73 years old former *guru* (i.e. teacher, preacher) of this sect for ten years, 1918-1928, but now a preacher of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Sumalbag is from Latap, Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija where this interview was held on April 27, 1960.

Expressions like "Sumalbag says," "Sumalbag states" and the like have been purposely left out to avoid a cumbersome tone in the narrative.

[45] This writer was not able to get any other information aside from that mentioned above about Aromin from Sumalbag, his informant.

[46] *Infra.*

[47] This and the following citations are quoted by Isabelo de los Reyes in his book *La Religion Antigua de los Filipinos*, Manila: Imprenta de El Renacimiento, 1909, p. 20.

The Spanish text: "Entre estos tenian su mayor veneracion a un ydolo cuyo nombre era *Batala*, la cual reverencia la aviantomado por tradicion."

The term "Bathala" or "Badhala," Isabelo de los Reyes adds, indicates a Brahmanistic influence on the pre-Spanish Filipino religion, and goes on to say: "The word 'Bathara' in Sanscrit (sacred language of the Hindus) signifies 'Lord'. The Bataks, the Buginese and the Macassars called their god Bathala (lord) Guru (master) the cognomination of Siva, the third person of the Brahmanic triad."

De los Reyes further states that the name "Bathala or Badhala is used only by the Filipinos who had relations with the Malay Hindus or the Moslems, i.e. those from Manila to the South. In northern Luzon this name is unknown."

As can be seen from this brief discussion, the term "Bathala," though its use was not so widespread but was confined to only a segment of pre-Hispanic Philippines, was used to designate "God." The ancient Filipino idea of God definitely shows some traces of anthropomorphism, a factor which, as subsequent discussions will show, is also present in all the other sects studied for this paper.

Be that as it may, the sect *Sambahang Rizal* professed the belief that Rizal is the "Soń of Bathala" in the same manner that Jesus Christ is considered the "Son of God" by all the orthodox Christian religions. The doctrines and teachings of Rizal are to be found in his novels, *El Filibusterismo* and the *Noli Me Tangere*, doctrines, which however vague they might have appeared to the members of the sect, each member was expected to believe. The two works were considered the "Bible" of the sect.

Sacraments and Rituals

The sacraments are "basically similar"[48] to those of the Catholic Church with some changes suited to the particular needs of this sect.

Baptism consisted in the Trinitarian formula; i.e. the prospective member was baptized in "the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Water was used by aspersion, and members were given the orthodox names like Maria, Juan, José, etc. Baptism, however, was only for infants and children, not for adult converts. Confirmation, performed by the "lalawigan guru" (*preacher of the province*), consisted in the members' promise to uphold the beliefs of the *Sambahang Rizal*. Although the sacrament of matrimony was also "similar" to that of Catholics, the ceremonies for the dead consisted in prayers asking Bathala that "the dead merit heaven through the merits of Dr. Rizal." The sacrament of holy orders, as such, was not within the framework of the church, although Aromin himself taught the *gurus*.

Hierarchy

The *gurus*, who belonged to the lowest rung of the hierarchy of this sect, were obligated to preach the gospel of *Sambahang Rizal* (i.e. Rizal's teachings) in territories assigned to them. The "lalawigan guru" (*preachers of the province*) who would

[48] This assertion of our informant has to be taken with extreme caution. What Sumalbag means here, apparently, is that the outward appearance of the way these sacraments were conducted approximated those of the Catholic Church. We have no pretensions of a knowledge of theology and so we shall leave this fir further discussion by better qualified persons.

approximate the bishops of other faiths, were naturally higher in rank; it was their duty to perform the rites of confirmation and supervise the "gurus" under their jurisdiction. "Pangulu guru" (*chief preacher*) was the highest rank within the sect. Aromin, the founder of the sect, held this title. However, there was a council, called the "Consejo Sambahang Rizal," which helped Aromin in the administration of the sect. This was formed by the "pangulu guru," and six other members of the sect (not necessarily the "lalawigan guru") selected by Aromin himself. The "Consejo Sambahang Rizal" met in Manila when Aromin transferred his residence there.

Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija, however, remained the training center for "gurus;" it was from there that these "gurus" were sent to preach the beliefs of this sect to other places.

There used to be a church of the sect near what is at present Quirino Avenue and Julian Aguila Street in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija. Churches of the sect were also found in Umingan, Sta. Maria de Pila, Mangatarem, Rosales, Balungao, and in Manaoag, all in Pangasinan, and chapels were found in other towns in Nueva Ecija at the height of the popularity of the sect when it could count on about 7,000 followers in these places mentioned.

A typical church or chapel would have an altar facing the congregation. This altar was draped in the Philippine flag. On the altar was prominently displayed a statue of Rizal.

As far as can be determined, this sect is already extinct.

Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga)[49]

"Bathalismo" is a derivative from "Bathala" which, as has already been shown, is the ancient Filipino term for "God." "Bathalismo," therefore, may be loosely translated into English as "Bathalaism" or "Belief in Bathala." Venancio P. Wagan, founder and presently the Supreme Bishop of the sect, has an interesting explanation of the term. Says Wagan:[50]

> I know, and it is also written in the pages of history by the heroes Paterno and Basa, that at the establishment of the Philippine Republic was also established the Philippine Religion called "BATHALA," "ANAKHALA," and "KALAPATI" which in the abbreviated form of today is "BATHALISMO" Inc.; (INANG MAHIWAGA).

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[49] We are most fortunate in our discussion of this sect for a book containing documents, rituals, hymns, etc. of the sect is available to the researcher. *Vide*: *Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga)*, n.p. n.d. 120 p. illustrated As the book is written in Tagalog, the citations will be in English translation as given in the text, and the Tagalog original will be included in the footnotes. Henceforth, the book will be cited as Bathalismo and the sect as Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga) to avoid confusion.
However, it must be stated here that the data taken from the book must be taken with extreme caution inasmuch as there are, at least for the present, no available means of checking all of them.

[50] The Tagalog text: "Nalalaman ko at nasusulat din sa mga dahon ng kasaysayan na ang pagkakatayo ng Pamahalaang Republica Filipina ay kalakip ang Pananampalatayang Filipino na "BATHALA," 'ANAKHALA," at "KALAPATI" na isinulat ng mga Bayaning Paterno at Basa, na sa maikling salita ngayon ay "BATHALISMO" Inc.; (INANG MAHIWAGA). *Bathalismo*, p. 5. All words in capital letters are transcribed as written in the book.

Unfortunately, Wagan failed to cite the sources from which he obtained his data, and it may be quite impossible for him to support his assertion as the known writings of Paterno do not indicate the establishment of a new religion called "Bathala," "Anakhala" and "Kalapati" at the inauguration of the Philippine Republic. (What Wagan means here, obviously, is the one inaugurated in Kawit, Cavite, on June 19, 1898, and not the Japanese sponsored Philippine Republic inaugurated on October 14, 1943 or the Philippine Republic inaugurated on July 4, 1946 when the United States of America granted the independence of the Philippines). Contrary to Wagan's allegations, Basa is not known to have written any history book, before or after the inauguration of the Philippine Republic.

A perusal of a work written by Pedro A. Paterno,[51] available to this writer, yielded no information about the religion "Anakhala" and "Kalapati." However, in this same book, Paterno writes about *Bathalismo* and its influence on some aspects of the life of the pre-Spanish Filipino.

Paterno states that *Bathalismo* belonged "to the last days of the Tagalog civilization,"[52] that is to say, the era immediately before the Spanish conquest. The followers of this sect who inhabited what was then known as the Tagalog region professed a belief in the deity, "Bathala" and a kind of pantheism. We are told, for instance, that they had:

> ... a profound conviction in the presence of the Supreme *Láuon* of the only *Malàuak* (Immense) *Bathala*, in the rivers, in the fields, in the mountains, in the sea, in the fields sown with seeds, in the houses, in all beings, everywhere.[53]

The religion preached that man had three spirits completely distinct from each other: the *caluluá* which corresponded to the intelligent soul, the *diwá* which corresponded to the sensitive soul, and the *laygo*, which corresponded to the vegetative soul.[54] But this trinity of spirits, each with a distinct personality or existence, did not form three beings, but one being only, i.e., the soul. The follower of *Bathalismo* had the obligation to save his soul so that he would enjoy happiness in *Kalualhatian* (a kind of heaven).[55] The souls of the evil ones were condemned to pain and suffering in *Casanáan* which was inhabited by demons.[56]

Bathalismo also preached the brotherhood of men, termed the *sandugo* (of one blood), as well as the equality of everyone. Thus, this sect also held that man should be free from oppression and slavery.[57] It was probably for this reason that *Bathalismo*

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[51] Pedro A. Paterno. *Synopsis de Historia de Filipinas*. Manila: Imprenta "La Republica," 1911, p. 135.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 86. The Spanish text: " ... a los ultimos dias de la civilizacion tagala."
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 221. The Spanish text: " ... una conviccion profunda en la presencia del *Lauon* Supremo, del unico *Malauak* (Inmenso) *Bathala* en los rios, en los campos, en las montanas, en el mar, en los sembrados, en los casas, en todos seres, en todas las partes."
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

destroyed the hereditary castes, and laid more stress on virtues, intelligence, and the capacity for work rather than on aristocracy and power.[58]

However, *Bathalismo* had a hierarchy of officials as can be seen in the office of the *sónat* (bishop) and that of the *alagar* (priest).[59] It might be inferred that it was the duty of these church officials to spread the doctrines of *Bathalismo*.

These are the main tenets of *Bathalismo* which Wagan claims are presently "abbreviated" (?) in *Bathalismo Inc.* (*Inang Mahiwaga*). The explanation of the other term of the nomenclature of this sect, "Inang Mahiwaga" may be even more difficult to seek. The book entitled *Bathalismo* which has been used as the basis for our discussion, contains no definite passages to explain the term. However, the book makes reference to Bishop (*Obispa!*) Maria Loreta V. Garcia variously referred to as the "Blessed Mother" (*Mahal na Iná*) and "Mysterious Mother" (*Ináng Mahiwaga*).[60] Does the term "Ináng Mahiwaga" refer to Maria Loreta V. Garcia?[61]

Establishment of the Sect[62]

It is not known whether this sect was in any way affiliated with the "*Sambahang Rizal*" of Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija; neither is its actual date of establishment known. However, Wagan[63] assures us that he established it after several years of study and

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[60] *Bathalismo*, p. 32.
[61] That this sect gives much importance to the "Mysterious Mother," Maria Loreta V. Garcia, may be gleaned from the many pictures of hers included in the book (vide pictures facing pp. 16, 33, 50, and 120) in which, among others, she is shown dressed in the robes of a bishop complete with mitre and Episcopal staff! If this sounds strange, her life as reported in the book is even more so.

Although this account begins with the less mysterious date and place of her birth (December 15, 1907 in Alfonso, Cavite) it is interspersed with such fantastic details as Garcia has two sisters, one obviously normal, and the other, a fish or siren (*isda o sirena*) called Enomine Domine Mintuam Envalioreyna Dei; she was reared in a secret cave called the "cave of mercy" (cueva ng awa); she was later brought to live in the "limbo of the blessed" (*limbo ng banal*); and still much later brought to a chapel where three hermits consecrated her; after six days she was brought to the river Jordan where she was baptized by the Most Blessed Father (*Amang Kabanal-banalan*) and by the Mother of Mothers (*Inang Kaina-inahan*).

At the right age (*nang siya ay nasa katamtamang gulang*) she was made to marry Martin Herfacio from Sinaliw, Alfonso, Cavite. Of this union were born seven children, four boys and three girls. The fourth boy, however, was born under mysterious circumstances, and was called Emmanuel Salvador del Mundo; the nine choirs of angels cared for this boy (*inalagaan na siya ng Siyam na Corong Angelico*).

So far this narration of fantastic details (*vide Bathalismo*, pp. 33-35). As can be seen in this narration, the details are so fantastic one wonders whether the anonymous writer of the account was serious or whether he needed the services of a psychiatrist. However, in a signed note after this account, Wagan assures his readers: "I vouch for the truth of the above (account)." "... *pinatutunayan ko ... ang lahat ng nasa itaas nito.*" We shall leave the facts to speak for themselves.

[62] *Vide* "Kasaysayan ng Bathalismo," "Santa Iglesia Filipina," "Samahang Espiritual Katahimikan May Kasarinlan" in *Bathalismo*, pp. 37-39.
[63] Practically nothing is known of Venancio P. Wagan, the founder of this sect, except for this very meager information taken from the book *Bathalismo*, p. 45: "(Wagan) is a former musician and member of the Municipal Board of the English Government on Campo Manila Street at Singapore. While there, he came to know of a religion called "Sagrada Familia" (*Ika 12 ngAgosto ng taong 1899, noon ako'y naging isang kawani sa mga manunugtog sa Banda Municipal ng Gobierno Ingles sa Singapore at dito ako nagkaroon ng pagkakataon na makilala ang isang Relihion na tinatawag na 'SAGRADA FAMILIA'*).

investigation. This sect, Wagan goes on to say, originated from the *Samahang Espiritual, Katahimikan May Kasarinlan, Inc.* ("Spiritual Association, Peace with Independence, Inc.").[64] On June 19, 1936, however, Wagan continues, the Bishop founders of the *Iglesia Nacional Filipina, Iglesia Catolica Apostolica Romana, Iglesia Liberal Filipina, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Iglesia Cristiana Filipina, Iglesia Mistica Filipina*[65] agreed to join the said "*Bathalismo*" (*Inang Mahiwaga*) *Inc.*, and the Supreme Bishop of this church (i.e. *Bathalismo Inc.*) was recognized as the head of the said faith.

This sect was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (*Kawanihan ng Kalakal at Paggawa*), as Wagan writes it) on November 25, 1948. This date may be considered as the formal establishment of the sect.

Aims of the Sect

The aims of the sect have been succinctly stated by Wagan in the following words: "to be united, to love and help one another," "to uphold true reason, truth, and works of charity..." These are the principles, purposes, and aims of *Bathalismo* (*Inang Mahiwaga*) *Inc.*"[66] Wagan also adds as the other aims of the sect: "to investigate the lives and be familiar with our great heroes like José Rizal, Padre Burgos..." "so that the enslaved truth, justice, and faith, and the unity of the race and country be upheld,"[67] as the other aims of the sect.

Beliefs of the Sect

Wagan states that the basis of the beliefs of the sect may be found in Isaias 2, 1-3.[68] However, he quotes only Isaias 2, 2:[69]

In our attempt to gather more information about Wagan, we wrote him a letter in which we requested him, among other things, to send us a short biographical sketch. In his reply to us dated July 11, 1960 and sent from the central office of his sect in San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija Wagan said that he could not send us answers to our questionnaire but invited us to visit him in the headquarters of the sect. Pressure of work and lack of time make it impossible for us to accept his invitation.

[64] *Bathalismo*, p. 9.

[65] *Loc. cit.* The sects mentioned here, except the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and the *Iglesia Mistica Filipina*, are not registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission. Of the alleged union of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* with *Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga) Inc.* Mons. Santiago Fonacier, former Obispo Maximo and at the time of the alleged union the first Assistant Secretary General of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* told this writer in an interview (Pasay City, October 20, 1960): "I do not know of any conversation or conference between Wagan and the late Bishop Aglipay, much less a union between *Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga) Inc.* and the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. Otherwise, Bishop Aglipay would have told me and I am positively sure that he never mentioned anything about the alleged conference between himself and the founder or any member of the *Bathalismo (inang Mahiwaga) Inc.*

[66] *Bathalismo*, pp. 6-7. The Tagalog text: MAGJAISA, MAGMAHALAN, MAGTULUNGAN, itindig ang tunay na KATUIRAN, KATOTOHANAN at KAWANGGAWA ... Iyan ang simulain, patakaran at tuntunin ng "BATHALISMO INC. (Inang Mahiwaga).

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 37. The Tagalog text: "Nang masuri at makilala ng ating mga Dakilang Bayaning sila Gat. Jose Rizal, Padre Burgos ... upang ibangon ang naaping KATOTOHANAN, KATARUNGAN, PANANAMPALATAYA at PAGKAKAISA ng Lahi sa Lahi at ng Bayan sa Bayan."

[68] The Tagalog texts, as they appear on pp. 8-9 in *Bathalismo* are the following: Isaias 2, 2, erroneously cited as Isaias 2, 1-3 by Wagan: *Sa mga huling araw ang buhay ng Panginoon ay matitindig sa taloktok ng mga bundok at mga burol at ang Bansa ay magsisiparoon doon upang mag-aral at lumakad sa landas ng Panginoon.*

> And in the last days the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it.

He also includes Isaias 2, 19 and makes this appear as part of Isaias 2, 1-3:

> And they shall go into the holes of rocks and into the caves of the earth, from the face of the fear of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty when he shall rise up to strike the earth.

In further support of his claims, he also cites Isaias 3, 1-3. Actually he quotes only Isaias 3, 2-3, and this with marked variations in the Tagalog version:

> The strong man and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the cunning man, and the ancient. The captain over fifty, and the honorable in countenance, and the counselor, and the architect, and the skilful in eloquent speech.

However, Wagan does not elaborate on these citations and one seeks in vain for his interpretation of these lines to show their relevance to the sect. Be it mentioned, however, that there is a predilection of this sect to have its centers of worship in heavily wooded areas, near mountains, and hills.

What may be considered as another basis for the establishment of the sect is Wagan's preoccupation with what he terms, "VOICES" (capitals are his). Wagan mentions about his conferences with the "VOICES" which, he adds, the true follower of his sect must follow. Because of these "mysterious voices," he continues, his followers would suffer no troubles. With a certain flourish, he goes on to say that according to the "VOICES" his sect had already sprung up from our (i.e. the Filipino) race and our native land even before the coming of the missionaries from foreign lands."[70]

Unfortunately, however, Wagan does not explain what these "voices" are, or where they came from, or how he manages to have "conferences" with them.

The following, misquoted as part of Isaias, 1-3 is actually Isaias 2, 19: *At ang mga tao ay magsisipasok sa bitak ng mga bato at yungib ng mga lupa sa landas ng Panginoon sa kakilabutan sa Panginoon.*

The following, though not the exact Tagalog rendition of what Wagan cites as Isaias 2, 1-3 is, actually, with variations, Isaias 2.: *Sa mga huling araw ay may isang lalaking ititindig ang Panginoon, ng Panginoon ng mga Hukbo ng mga matatalinong mga tao, ng mga tagapayo, ng mga matatalinong mangangalakal at mga eencanto. Bata ang mangungulo sa kanila at sanggol ang mangunguna.*

[69] English citations from the *Holy Bible Old Testament in the Douay-Challoner text: New Testament and Psalms in the Confraternity Text.* Rev. John P. O'Connell, editor. Chicago: The Catholic Press, Inc. c1950, p. 639.

[70] English citations from the *Holy Bible Old Testament in the Douay-Challoner text: New Testament and Psalms in the Confraternity Text.* Rev. John P. O'Connell, editor. Chicago: The Catholic Press, Inc. c1950, p. 639. *Bathalismo*, p. 37. The Tagalog text: Na sa kanilang muling pakikipanayam ay sa "VOCES" na lamang sa iba't ibang Pder, o Pavor na kanilang maibigan, o mapili na kung kaya itinagubilinang tandaan ang kanilang tinig, o voces. Na iyan nga kanggang sa panahong ito ay sinusunod ng mga tunay na alagad ng "BATHALISMO" o, 'STA. IGLESIA LIPINA" Na dahil din sa VOCES, o Espiritu, o Mahiwagang Voces (Juan: 14, 16:17.26) kung kaya matahimik at walang ligalig na dinanas ang mga sumusunod o, magkakapatid.Na ayon sa 'ESPIRITU' o, 'MAHIWAGANG VOCES' ang "STA. IGLESIA o. BATHALISMO" ay katutubo ng ating lahi at ng ating Lupa ng Tinubuan bago pa dumating dito ang mga misionerong taga ibang Bansa, o Romano at iba pang Pananampalataya dito sa Kapuluang Filipinas. Na ang mga umiiral na Pananampalatayang iyan ng Lahing Filipino, o ng Katagalugan.

Be that as it may, the beliefs which the members of this sect profess are contained in another article by Wagan.[71] These beliefs, twelve in all, are not purely religious in nature and, as shall be seen later, also include what may be the "political" or "patriotic" credo of the sect. However, we shall cite her only those which have a bearing on our study. The following are the beliefs:

1. Rizal was not killed when he was "supposedly" shot at Bagumbayan in 1896. He left for China taking a boat which came here, disguised himself as a Chinese and was not recognized by anyone.
2. The Philippines is for Filipinos only.
3. There are no rich or poor in this world; all shall be equal.
4. In good mountains reside the enchanted and almighty ones.
5. The Philippines shall become a kingdom whose monarchs shall come from here.

In another article, also by Wagan,[72] entitled "Ang Cristo Jesus" (Christ Jesus) one comes across the following words: "According to many readers, Christ Jesus was killed and nailed to the Cross by the Jews. But what those readers do not understand are the words (") Jesus is true God and true man (")"[73] However, Wagan tactfully sidetracks the issue, and it is not clear whether or not he himself subscribes to this orthodox Christian doctrine; i.e. that Christ is true God and true man. However, as in his belief with regard to the execution and death of Rizal, he has, what Biblical scholars would certainly consider, a completely farfetched theory on Christ. Wagan says, for instance, that "it was not Christ who was killed and nailed to the Cross by the Jews."[74] This is how he explains this "theory": When the Jews were deliberating on whether or not to free Barrabas, Christ, using his powers as God, swapped faces with Barrabas! When the Jews decided to crucify Christ --- which they did --- it was, therefore, Barrabas (with the face of Christ) who was crucified and not Christ Himself! After the crucifixion of Barrabas (?), Christ went to other nations to preach Reason and Truth.[75]

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[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46. The following is the Tagalog original and is numbered as it appears in the book cited. The other principles having no bearing on our study (i.e. No. 4: The Filipina woman shall wear the new dresses worn by the foreigners," p. 45, *op.cit*) have been purposely left out.

1. Si Rizal ay hindi namatay noong binaril sa Bagumbayan noong 1896. Siya'y tumungo sa China lulan ng isang bapor na nagpunta dito, nakabalatkayong intsik na di makilala ng sino man.
2. Na ang Filipinas ay para sa mga Filipino lamang
3. Na dito sa Sangdaigdaigan ay walang mayaman at maralita, ang lahat ay magiging pantay-pantay lamang
4. Na sa mga bundok na mainam ay may mga Encantado ang Makapangyarihan
5. Na ang Filipinas ay magiging isang Kaharian at Emporio ng mga Monarkang dito magsisipanggaling.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 55. The Tagalog text: "Sangayon sa maraming mambabasa ang Cristo Jesus ay pinatay at pinajuan sa Cruz ng mga Judio. Nguni't ang hindi nakukuro ng mga iyan ay ang salitang si Jesus ay Dios na totoo at tao namang totoo."

[74] *Loc. cit.* The Tagalog text: " ... hindi ang Cristo Jesus ang napatay at napakuan sa Cruz ng mga Judio."

[75] *Loc.cit.* The Tagalog text: " ... Sa mga sandaling pinagpasiyahang palayain si Barrabas ng personaho, o actor upang ang Dramang ibig maitanghal ng kapangyarihan sa Sangkatauhan ng Bilang Misterio ay maisulat o maisakatuparan, na kung sakaling ibig pag-aralan, o sundan ng mga tao, ay nang huwag maligaw. Na dahil diya'y bagam pinalabas na sinasabi si Barrabas ay nawala na rin sa dahon ng kasaysayan, sapagka't siya nga ang ibig pinatay at napakuan sa Cruz. Nang maganap ang kabuuan ng Ministerio ang Cristo Jesus ay naglagalag sa iba't

Wagan goes on to say that in the year 1861 Christ was reincarnated in "our great martyr, Dr. José Rizal, of the brown race and of our Mother Philippines."[76]

Rizal, in the belief of this sect, is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. Is Rizal, therefore, God? Wagan would not hesitate to answer in the affirmative. "From the beginning, now, and in the future, that was the principle upon which our faith is based," he says, "without any reservation whatsoever, we say that the said Dr. José Rizal of the Philippines is the All Powerful Bathala (i. God) of this world."[77]

Rituals and Sacraments

Insofar as can be ascertained from the book, *Bathalismo*, already cited many times, the sect has only three sacraments: Baptism which makes use of water whether by aspersion or by immersion is not indicated, Confirmation, and Matrimony.

The handbook does not mention anything about the ordination of the ministers of this sect. However, the fact that this sect has sacraments would imply that there are those within the sect who would administer them.

Hierarchy

We are told, however, of the presence of a Council (*pamunuan*) which may be considered as the hierarchy of the sect. This council is composed of five members whose names and addresses appear below:[78]

Agapito Ilustricimo, Palakpakan, San Pablo, Laguna
Venancio P. Wagan, San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija
Victor Bundok, Lian, Batangas
Severino Apasan, Tuy, Batangas
Juan A. Nagaño, San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija

Membership

Inasmuch as Wagan, who is perhaps the only source for the present, did not send us answers to our questionnaire which, among other things, included a question with regard to the present number of members of the sect, we can only conjecture as to the actual members of the *Bathalismo*. Although the headquarters of the sect is found in San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija, there are other branches of the sect to be found in Bundok Kinabuhayan in Banahaw, Dolores, Tayabas, in Lian, Bundok ng Sandiego,

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ibang bansa upang mangaral, o magturo ng buong Katuwiran at Katotohanan sa lahat ng sa kaniya ay makikinig at susunod.

[76] *Op. cit.* pp. 55-56. The Tagalog text: Nang taong 1861, ay siyang pag-reengcarnal, o pagsalin ng kanyang Espiritu sa isang sanggol na isinilang. Sa panahong yaon na dili iba't an gating Dakilang Martir Dr. Jose Rizal ng lahing Kayumanggi at ng Inang Bayang Filipinas.

[77] Letter to this writer, dated July 11, 1960. The Tagalog text: " ... iyang ang aming simulating pinaninindigan ...ula pa sa una, sa ngayon, at sa hinaharap na hindi naman maaaring ipangimi kaninoman at sa alin mang nasiyon sa Mundong ito. Na sinasabi kung si Gat. Dr. Jose Rizal ng Bansang Filipinas ang Siyang Tanging Makapangyarihang Bathala sa Sangdaigdigang ito."

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Batangas, in Banilla, Bundok ng Arayat, Pampanga. It is presumed that the sect has some following in these places.

The Adarnistas or the Iglesiang Pilipina[79]

Practically nothing has been written on the *Adarnista* sect, also known as the *Iglesiang Pilipina* (literally, the "Philippine Church"). To the knowledge of this writer, the only article written so far on this sect[80] contains no data about the actual foundation of the sect. Hence, like that of the other sects under study, it would be very difficult to ascertain the actual date of its establishment. However, Alfredo Salvador, a pastor of the sect, claims that this sect was founded by Candida Balantac, a ninety-three year old widow called by her followers "Mother Adarna" (*Inang Adarna*), Teacher, (*Maestra*), and Holy Spirit (*Espiritu Santo*) in Bangar, La Unión in 1901.[81] Originally from San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, Balantac first began preaching in La Unión, Pangasinan, Tarlac, finally establishing a "colony" of the sect in barrio Olivete, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, where she presently resides.

Why has the sect been named "Adarnista"? It seems probable that the term is a derivative from "Inang Adarna," one of the names by which Balantac is known by her followers. Her followers believe her to be an "enchanted one" (*engkantada*). Salvador, for one, claims that he saw with his own eyes a rainbow which would be formed around Balantac, thus giving her the effect of an "adarna" (a bird of varied colors).

The reasons or the basis for the establishment of the sect are also unknown, as Salvador, our informant, was not familiar with them himself. However, it seems that Balantac has known Venancio P. Wagan, the founder of *Bathalismo*, and if we are to believe Wagan's assertion, Balantac helped Wagan establish his sect. In fact, Balantac is listed as one of the original incorporators of the *Bathalismo* sect.[82]

As has already been shown, *Bathalismo* was established in 1938 while Salvador maintains that the *Adarnista* sect was founded in 1901. However, this seeming discrepancy may be explained when one remembers that Balantac, as Salvador has pointed out, first preached the beliefs of the new faith years before its actual establishment. Is it not possible that in her itinerant preaching days Balantac came across Wagan and agreed to help Wagan to establish his sect in 1938? Is it not also possible that Balantac first belonged to the Wagan group, as Wagan implies, and for reasons known only to herself, broke up with the group to form a new group which

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[79] This account is based mainly on our interview with Alfredo Salvador, a thirty year old pastor of the *Iglesiang Pilipina* as the *Adarnista* sect is also known, on April 28, 1960 in Tagumbao, Gerona, Tarlac. In this discussion, however, the sect shall be cited henceforth as *Adarnista*, and the members *Adarnistas*. Expression like "Salvador says," "Salvador states," unless necessary, have been purposely left out to avoid a cumbersome tone in the narrative.

Gavina's article, *infra*, shall be cited whenever necessary. During the interview, Salvador did not avail himself of any notes; this may account for the slight discrepancies between his account and with some aspects of the Gavina article.

[80] *Vide* Napoleon R. Gavina "Nueva Ecija's Religious Adarnistas" in Kislap-Graphic (May 4, 1960), p. 16 already cited.

[81] It may be very difficult to ascertain Salvador's assertion as the papers of incorporation, a great help along these lines, are not be found in the Securities and Exchange Commission.

[82] *Vide* "Kasaysayan ng Bathalismo", o "Santa Iglesia Filipina" "Samahang Espiritual Katahimikang May Kasarinlan" in *Bathalismo*, p. 37.

eventually became the *Adarnista* sect? Breaking away from the main sect, to form splinter-sects seems to be a common characteristic among the sects studied, as shall be seen later. It seems that the second conjecture is plausible enough, in which case, the *Adarnista* sect could not have been established by Balantac in 1901, as Salvador alleges.

Beliefs

Be that as it may, the following is a summary of the beliefs of this sect: 1) Rizal is a god of the Filipino people; 2) Rizal is true god and true man; 3) Rizal was not executed as has been mentioned by historians;[83] 4) Man is endowed with a soul; as such, man is capable of good deeds; 5) heaven and hell exist but are, nevertheless, "within us"; 6) The abode of the members of the sect in Bongabon, Nueva Ecija is the New Jerusalem or Paradise; 7) the caves in Bongabon are the dwelling place of Jehovah or God; and 8) there are four persons in God: God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Mother. *Adarnistas* believe that God must have a Mother and that is the Virgin Mary.

The Sacraments

The sacraments have been, and are still conducted to simulate those of the holic Church, at least in outward appearances. 1) Baptism, as performed by Danny Sibat, a pastor of the sect, is "similar" to the Aglipayan ritual; 2) Confirmation is administered by Candida Balantac; 3) Marriage is also administered by Balantac; 4) as is also confession; 5) and the last rites of the dead are performed by an Aglipayan priest invited to do so.

Regular worship consists in a two-hour ceremony held each Wednesday and Sunday morning from seven o'clock. Gavina says that this is a "mass" as there is no sacrifice, it would be more proper to call it simply "a religious ceremony." During fiestas, i.e. on Rizal's birthday and death anniversaries, the raising of the Filipino flag precedes the ceremony. The religious ceremony consists in the recitation of prayers led by the officiating pastor, the singing of hymns in honor of God and of Rizal, and ends with the pastor advising his flock to practice love of God and of neighbor "through the merits of Rizal."

These prayers and hymns may be offered in the home of the pastor, or, as is the case of the Olivete, Bongabon congregation, in caves. If the small chapel in the house where Salvador is presently staying may be considered typical of the chapels of this sect, then one can say that in *Adarnista* chapels may be seen an altar crowded with the crucifix, statues and pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and of Lourdes, in the center of which is prominently displayed a picture of Rizal, and beside which may also be seen the pictures of heroes (i.e. Luna, Burgos, del Pilar, Mabini, Bonifacio, etc.)

However, in Olivete their "temples or chapels stand on the rocky mountain top, about 200 meters apart. The cave is the repository of their sublimest prayer and the shrine of their spiritual worship... Each day, (the *Adarnistas*) go to the cave to offer

[83] Compare this with a similar belief of Wagan and his followers. *Vide* p. 60 of this paper.

prayers. They leave their jewelry, money and shoes outside before entering the dark 'church.' One of them kneels at the mouth of the cave, murmurs his prayers, and those behind second their prayers.[84]

Hierarchy

Candida Balantac is the head of the sect, with Alfredo Salvador, Felipe Baldonado and Danny Bibat as her right hand men.

Membership

Gavina says that Balantac claims 10, 000 followers in La Union, Isabela, Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija, and Baguio City. Salvador, on the other hand told this writer, that the sect now has 20, 000 followers in Gerona, Tarlac, San Jose, Nueva Ecija, Aritao, and Bayombong in Nueva Vizcaya, Rosales, Pangasinan, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, Zambales, Ilocos Sur, and even in Manila. Inasmuch as presently there is no way of checking these figures, they are given here for what they may be worth.

From the *Adamista* sect, another sect was formed: the "Kaama-amahan ng Ama at Kaina-inahan ng Ina, Inc." (*Father of Fathers and Mother of Mothers, Inc.*).[85] The chieftain is a widow and sister-in-law of Balantac, Laureta Dion Balantac, widow of the late Alfonso Balantac (elder brother of Candida Balantac). Laureta, 60, succeeded to the leadership after the death of Alfonso and secession of their group from Candida.[86]

The Iglesia Sagrada Filifina ng Sinco Vucales y Virtudes Tierra Santa de Jerusalem (The Sacred Philippine Church of the Five Vowels and Virtues Holy Land of Jerusalem)

We first saw Macario Mercado, a diminutive, bearded, ascetic looking seventy year old, with an air of mystery around him at the Rizal Shrine in Calamba, Laguna during the Rizal Day celebrations on June 19, 1960. Like us, he was impatiently waiting for the parade to begin. What struck us as equally mysterious was the banner which he was carrying. Made to simulate the Philippine flag, the banner carried the following inscriptions:

IKAW ang
T. I. B. O. **5-15-59**
B. O. S.
IGLESIA SAGRADA FILIFINA (sic) NG
SINCO (sic) VUCALES (sic) SIETE VIRTUDES
TIERRA SANTA DE JERUSALEM
Bayang Banal
Candelaria, Quezon

[84] Gavina, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[85] Incorporation papers of this new sect are not found in the Securities and Exchange Commission.
[86] Gavina, *op. cit.* p. 16.

(a key)
Ito MGA ANAK ANG IKALABING-TATLONG SUSI
NG INYONG HINAHANAP

which may be translated as follows: "YOU ARE the / T.I.B.O./ B.O.S./ PHILIPPINE SACRED CHURCH of/ FIVE VOWELS SEVEN VIRTUES/ HOLY LAND OF JERUSALEM/ Holy Town/ Candelaria, Quezon/ (between the above inscriptions and what follows is the figure of a key)/ This MY CHILDREN IS THE THIRTEENTH KEY/ WHICH YOU ARE LOOKING FOR/"[87]

We knew then and there that the ascetic looking old man was a member of still another cult in honor of Rizal. We were not mistaken. After the parade, in a house of one of the members of the *Watawat ng Lahi*[88] at Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna we saw Mercado again and were able to interview him about the cult of which he is presently the leader. To say the least, this share-cropper, who joined the cult in 1953, and who is know a resident of Pitogo, Quezon, was very cooperative. He patiently answered all our questions and went even as far as to give us a notebook which contained, in longhand, hymns and prayers of his cult. This interview with him, together with that with Quirino Quiban, a thirty year old member of the sect, from Lepanto St., Bernard, Leyte, but presently employed by the Bureau of Public Works in San Pablo, Laguna, is the basis of this short account of the sect.[89]

Establishment of the Sect

As far as can be ascertained, the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*[90] was founded in 1926 in Candelaria, Quezon by Purificación and Severo Aviela of the same town. Nothing much is known of the Avielas, except that they were humble peasant folks known to have preoccupied themselves with "things of religion and of spirit." Now both dead, it would be impossible to determine their reasons for establishing this sect. Mercado himself states that he would not know of any reason why this sect was established.

Beliefs

The beliefs of this sect may be summed up in the following:

There are four persons in God: God the Father, the Mother (St. Mary), the Son (Christ), and the Holy Spirit. God the Mother is the Blessed Virgin Mary but it is the Blessed Virgin who is in Heaven, not to be confused with the Blessed Virgin who was born on earth and who became the earthly Mother of Christ. There are two Blessed Virgins!

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[87] Even with our insistent urging, Mercado was rather evasive when we requested him to decipher for us the cryptic message of these words. Are they magic words not to be shared with outsiders? Or could it be that they stand for nothing in particular?

[88] *Cf. infra.*

[89] Henceforth the sect shall be cited as *Iglesia Sagrada Familia*, for short. Also, this account shall avoid expressions like "Mercado says," "Quiban states" and the like to avoid a cumbersome tone of the narrative. Inasmuch as it would not add to the significance of the narrative, this account shall also avoid citing which parts of the narrative were gathered from Mercado or from Quiban.

[90] This sect is not registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Rizal is god: he is the second Christ. Rizal is alive. He is everywhere in the same manner that Christ, as God, is everywhere. After the second coming of Christ, Rizal will be His successor and Rizal will do the functions of Christ.[91]

Man is composed of body and soul. When man dies, the body dies, but the spirit goes up to heaven.

There is no hell, the sufferings of this world may be considered as the "hell."

Mt. Banahaw is the New Jerusalem. Christ spent his penance there. (*nagpepenitensiya si Kristo diyan*).

Sacraments and Rituals

This sect believes in a form of baptism. At baptism the one baptized is clothed in white to signify purity. Water is not used in this ceremony, only the imposition of the hands of the "chief" or leader.

None of the other sacraments of the Catholic Church are found in this sect; hence, the cult has no confirmation, no confession, no communion, no extreme unction, no holy orders, not even the sacrament of matrimony. (Members, it may be presumed, may be married by civil authorities).

What differentiates this sect from the other sects studied so far is the absence of churches or chapels of the sect. Services twice a month (on the fifteenth, for no special reason, and on the thirtieth, to commemorate the death of Rizal) are held in the homes of the members. On these occasions prayers are said and hymns sung.

Ministers

There are no ministers, as such, within the sect; only the late founders, Purificación and Severo Aviela, were ever the ministers of this sect. However, Macario Mercado is the "present chief" of the sect.

Membership

There are at present five to six hundred members of the sect to be found in Candelaria, Quezon.

The Watawat ng Lahi

In the outskirts of Calamba, Laguna stands a hill overlooking the town. On top of this hill, aptly called Lecheria by the Spanish friars who lived in the nearby Dominican hacienda many years ago --- for it was here where they kept cows and goats for milking purposes --- is a modernistic house, the residence of the present head of the *Watawat ng Lahi*, a large, though still unfinished church, and an assembly hall which also serves as the central office of the sect. Nearby, on the slope facing the Laguna de Bay may be seen the cemetery beside which is a monument of Bonifacio in

[91] Compare this with a similar belief of the *Bathalismo* and *Adarnista* sect.

the characteristic pose of brandishing a bolo, while not far away, in a prominent place on a leveled spot fronting these buildings, stands a monument of a brooding Rizal dressed in a heavy overcoat. Farther away, at the foot of the hill, facing Mt. Makiling, is the cluster of homes of some members of the sect; most are simple one-room affairs, others relatively imposing.

Here, members of the sect relate, the boy Rizal used to romp around; now on big celebrations of the sect, such as the birthday anniversary of Rizal, members of the sect from various parts of the country congregate. As house guests of the members who reside in Lecheria, these members make this yearly pilgrimage not only to take part in the traditional Rizal day celebrations in town, to have their children baptized, or, if newly converted themselves, to become formally members of the sect, but also to hear their leaders exhort them on their duties, and to attend religious observances which have become an integral part of the festivities.

Although this sect is still not as large as other Philippine sects like the *Iglesia ni Kristo*,[92] for instance, nor as affluent, this sect can now count on members found in all parts of the archipelago. There seems to be little doubt that the *Watawat ng Lahi*, among all the other sects which consider Rizal as a god, has the greatest number of members and is perhaps the most prosperous.

Some observers have marveled at the rapid growth of this sect and have asserted that the present state of the *Watawat ng Lahi* is a far cry from what it was several years ago.

Establishment of the Sect[93]

Accounts of the foundation of this sect are vague, if not altogether confusing. For instance, José B. Baricanosa, the present head, states: "This organization was founded in Masbate in 1914 by the heroes... This was later transferred to Pulong Ginto or Lecheria in 1936."[94] Elsewhere, Baricanosa has also stated: "Our great hero, Dr. José P. Rizal is the leader and founder of this organization."[95] This may be a little difficult to follow when one remembers that Rizal was executed on December 30, 1896

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[92] For a study of the Iglesia ni Kristo, *vide* Julita Reyes-Sta. Romana "The Iglesia ni Kristo: A Study" in *The University of Manila* JOURNAL OF EAST ASIATIC STUDIES, IV, 3 (July 1955) 329-437.

[93] This account of the foundation of the sect, whose name may be translated as "Banner of the Race" as well as a discussion of its beliefs, rituals, and hierarchy are based on the following: 1) our interviews with Mr. Jose Baricanosa and other leaders of the sect in Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna on May 16, 1960 and June 19, 1960; 2) a booklet published by the sect, *Dasalan ng Watawat ng Lahi* (Prayerbook of the Watawat ng Lahi), Calamba, Laguna: n.p. n.d. 117, p. 3) a typescript of Mr. Baricanosa's "Isang Maikling Kasaysayan ng Watawat ng Lahi" (A Short History of the *Watawat ng Lahi*) dated March 16, 1952. This witer would like to thank Mr. Baricanosa for the courtesies extended to him during these interviews and also for the material which Mr. Baricanosa so generously put at his disposal.

Baricanosa, "Isang Maikling Kasaysayan ng Watawat ng Lahi" typescript. Henceforth, this work shall be cited as *Maikling Kasaysayan*.

The Tagalog text: "Ng taong 1914 sa pulo ng Masbate ay itinatag ng mga bayani ... ang Simulaing ito."

[95] Dasalan ng Watawat ng Lahi. Kalamba, Laguna: n.p. n.d., p. 5 Henceforth this work shall be cited as *Dasalan*.

The Tagalog text: "(Ang) ating dakilang bayani na si Gat. Dr. Jose Rizal na siyang patnugot at nagtatag ng Simulaing ito."

At mapapakingan ang tinig marahil
Ng isang salterio ito nga ay ako rin
Inaawitan ka ng isang pag-giliw

which re-translated into English would be:

Safeguard the mysterious secret
And perhaps *you shall hear a voice*
Of a psalter which is I myself
Singing to you a song of love.
(italics supplied)

Compare this with the best known English translation of the poem by Charles E. Derbyshire:[100]

And when the dark night wraps the graveyard around
With only the dead in their vigil to see;
Break not my repose of the mystery profound
"Tis I, O my country, raising a song unto thee.

Or with the Spanish original of Rizal:[101]

Y cuando, en noche oscura, se envuelva el cementerio
Y solos solo muertos queden velando alli
No turbes su reposo, no turbes el misterio
Tal vez acordes oigas de citara o salterio;
Soy yo, querida Patria, yo que te canto a ti.

As can be seen, the Tagalog version is not as faithful to the Spanish original as it could have been. The idea "You shall hear a voice" which seems to be the main point in Baricanosa's argument in favor of "voices" is not present in the Spanish original.

Be that as it may, Baricanosa adds: "What is the mysterious voice which comes to the *Watawat ng Lahi*? It is the voice of the great hero (Rizal) and of his followers.

There have been various translations into Tagalog of Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios," the earliest translation being that of Andres Bonifacio at the time of the Katipunan. Not long ago theInstitute of National Language published a booklist which contains translations by fourteen Tagalog writers, among whom may be mentioned, Andres Bonifacio, Pascual H. Poblete, Jose Corazon de Jesus and Jose Villa Panganiban. *Vide Mga Salin sa Tagalog ng Ultimo Adios ni Dr. Jose Rizal* (Paper No. 16, Publications of the Institute of National Language) Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1958. 37 p.

The next cited here is taken from the translation of Jose Gatmaytan and that of Pascual H. Poblete which, except for the orthography and for some punctuation marks are identical. There is, however, a slight variation of these versions from that cited by the *Watawat ng Lahi*, and this consists in the use of "isang" in the *Watawat* version, whereas "aking" is used in the last line of both the Poblete and Gatmaytan versions. (*Vide* p. 8 and p. 15 of the booklet cited above).

[100] Gregorio F. Zaide, *Jose Rizal: Life, Works and Writings*. Manila: Villanueva Book Store, c1957 (295p) p. 207.

[101] *Poesias de Rizal, Con Un Estudio de la Personalidad de Rizal por el Mismo*, Jaime de Veyra, compiler, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1946, p. 70.

Because he it was who established this organization and it is also he who commands each member to do his duty.[102]

"It is this same voice which commanded Mateo Alcuran and Alfredo Benedicto, a lawyer, both of whom were then living in a house in Galas, near Manila, to go to the hill on Licheria (sic) to look for two men who were no other than Gaudioso Parabuac and Jovito Salgado," Baricanosa continues. "This they did on December 24, 1936, ... Every Saturday afternoon the holy voice taught them at the Licheria (sic) hill ... Judge Cirilo Lavadia from Sariaya, Quezon and Lorenzo Chacon, a lawyer from Surigao, Mindanao, were also with them (at these sessions).[103]

To the list of these individuals who first listened to the "holy voice" were added the names of Buenaventura Lazian, Lazaro Ocampo, Rosendo Salgado, Tomasa Banaybanay, Felipe Velasquez, and Juan Canicosa. "The voice ordered that an organization to be called "Samahang Watawat ng Lahi" be formed.[104] The first head of the organization was Gaudioso Parabuac.

As time went by many more would join the group. In August, 1941, Jose Baricanosa, Jacinta Amido, and Agapito Samson joined the group. But the work of the group was hampered during the Japanese Occupation. Some members, among whom Gaudioso Parabuac, first head of the group, were imprisoned at the Japanese garrison in Calamba but were later released. It was during the Japanese Occupation, however, (May 1944) that the organization was registered with the Bureau of Commerce under the name "Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi." As it appears in the incorporation papers the following were the members of the Board of Directors: Jose Baricanosa, chairman, Rosendo Salgado, vice chairman, Jovito Salgado, secretary, Felisa Ocdamia, treasurer, Alfredo Benedicto, Gaudisio Paraboac (sic), Eleuterio San Pedro, Lorenzo Ybuan, and Trinidad Banatin, members. In the same year, the organization saw its first branches established in Sinalhan, Sta. Rosa, Laguna and Bigaa, Cabuyao, Laguna.

The liberation from the enemy by the American forces saw the renewed activity of the organization. In April 1945, new members joined the group, among whom were men who would eventually become some of its most trusted leaders: Sotero Maka-irog, presently the secretary; Crispin M. Penid, now the vice-president of the organization. In this same year was established the branch of the sect in Tabon and Pinagdilawan, Binangonan, Rizal. This year saw also the move to spread the movement throughout

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[102] Dasalan, p. 8. The Tagalog text: "Alin ang mahiwagang tinig na dumarating sa Watawat ng Lahi? Ang tinig ng dakilang bayani at ng kanyang mga alagad. Sapagka't siya ang nagtatag ng Simulaing ito kung kaya siya rin ang naguutos kung ano ang dapat isagawa ng bawat isang kasapi."

[103] *Maikling Kasaysayan*, pp. 1-2. The Tagalog text: "Ang tinig ding iyang ang siyang nagutos kay G. Mateo Alcuran at Alfredo Benedicto isang mananangol ng sila ay nasa isang bahay sa Galas, malapit sa Maynila na magsadiya sila sa burol ng Licheria (sic) upang hanapin ang dalawang tao na dili iba't sina G. Gaudioso Parabuac at Jovito Salgado. Sila ay pinagtakpo (sic) roon ng ika 24 ng Diciembre, 1936 ... Sa tuing raw (sic) ng Sabado ng hapon sila ay pinangangaralan ng banal na tinig sa burol ng Licheria (sic) .... Nakasama nila roon si Hukom Carilo Lavadia sa taga Sariaya, Quezon at si G. Lorenzo Chacon isang mananangol na tiga Surigao, Mindanao."

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 2. The Tagalog text: "Ang tinig ang nagsabi na magtayo ng isang Simulain at pamagatang "Samahang Watawat ng Lahi."

With this assertion of Baricanosa, one may well ask: After all, how does Arsenio de Guzman and Rizal, for that matter, fit into the establishment of the sect? Are the names of Rizal and de Guzman thrown into this obvious fiasco with no purpose in mind but to mystify gullible members?

the archipelago. By 1949, the sect had spread and more members have been accepted. The approximately 5,000 members of the sect who took part in the Rizal day parade in Calamba on June 19, 1949 show that the organization had already grown by leaps and bounds. Presently, the organization has, in Mr. Baricanosa's estimate, about 100,000 members to be found in all parts of the country.

The basis of the beliefs of the sect, cited by Baricanosa, may be found in Isaias 2:1-5: "The word that Isaias the son of Amos saw, concerning Juda and Jerusalem. 2. And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many people shall go, and say: "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us in his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4. And he shall judge the Gentiles and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war. 5. O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Although these passages from the Bible would not, in any way, show that God ordained Rizal to be the founder of the sect, nor would they indicate "voices" to be heeded, nevertheless they would explain why the sect has a predilection for establishing its centers in mountains, hills, and heavily wooded areas.

However, Baricanosa has an interesting explanation of these passages in his attempt to show the relevance of the quotation to his sect: "According to the voice, the house of the Lord which has been constructed on top of the mountains can be seen (*ay mamamalas*) on Mt. Makiling before the town of Kalamba: from the said mountain will spring up the new world and here shall be seen the new Jerusalem ... after the Armageddon in the new world."[105]

Aims

The aims of the sect may be stated succinctly as follows: 1) to love God above all things 2) to love one's fellowman as one loves himself, and 3) to love the motherland and to respect and venerate the heroes of the race especially the martyr of Bagumbayan, Dr. Jose Rizal, to follow, to spread, and to support (*itaguyod*) their right teachings; and to serve the country with one's whole heart towards its order, progress, and peace.[106]

Beliefs

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[105] *Dasalan*, p. 11. The Tagalog text: "Ayon sa tinig ang bahay ng Panginoon na matatatag sa taluktok ng mga bundok ay mamamalas sa bundok ng Makiling na nakaharap sa bayan ng Kalamba, ang nasabing bundok ay bubuka ... agong daigdig."

[106] *...ide Patakaran* 1 p. also *Dasalan*, pp. 34-37. The Tagalog text: "Na, ang unang alituntunin na dapata sundin ng bawat kasapi ay IBIGIN ANG DIYOS NANG LALO SA LAHAT, ang ikalawa ay IBIGIN ANG KAPWA KATULAD NG PAGIBIG SA SARILI, at ang ikatlo ay IBIGIN ANG BAYANG TINUBUAN: dakilain at igalang ang mga bayani ng lahi lalo't higt ang martir ng Bagumbayan Gat. Dr. Jose Rizal; sundin, paunlarin at itaguyod ang kanilang mga makatarungang simulain; at kailangan ding buong pusong maglingkod nang tapat sa bayan sa ikaayos, ikauunlad at ika-papayapa." (*capitals in the original*)

As gathered from various authorities of the sect in interviews with them in Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna headquarters of the sect on May 16, 1960 and June 19, 1960, the following are the beliefs of the sect:[107]

The teachings of the sect are based on the commands of the Holy Moses, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the teachings of Dr. Jose Rizal culled from his writings.

Christians believe in the Trinity; the power of the Father was given to Moses; the power of the Son, given to Jesus Christ; and this sect believes that the power of the Holy Ghost was given to Dr. Jose Rizal

Jesus Christ is embodied in Dr. Jose Rizal and hence, Dr. Rizal is at once a god and a man.

Rizal is not dead; he is alive and is physically and materially present in the New Jerusalem which is presently hidden in the site extending from Mt. Makiling to Mt. Banahaw.

It is the voice of Rizal which commands the officials and the members what to do; this voice is heard in the weekly meetings. However, an invoker in the person of Gaudioso Parabuac, is needed to ask Rizal to come and talk to the members.[108]

If the Third World War breaks out, numberless peoples will be killed by atomic weapons. But after the war, Dr. Rizal will make an appearance to the new world, and he will lead the army of God.

Man has a soul, but a soul that is different from the soul of Dr. Rizal, for Rizal is god. Three days after his death and if he was holy in life, i.e. if he followed the commandments of God, man will rise again and his soul will proceed to the New Jerusalem. If he did not fulfill the commandments of God, the soul is not to be punished in hell (for there is no hell) but will be made to work in a place opposite the New Jerusalem.

There is a particular judgment (the soul is judged three days after death) and the last judgment (when all the creatures will be judged).

Rituals

The church of the sect in Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna, which may be typical of the sect, follows closely the physical appearance of a Catholic church. There is, for instance, a main altar with its image of the Risen Christ. However, a bigger statue of Rizal with a winged angel hovering over him, is also to be found there, which would tell the onlooker that he is in a church other than a Roman Catholic one. There are

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[107] Unless specified, the section of this paper is based on our interview with Mr. Jose B. Baricanosa, present head of the sect. If the data is taken from interviews with other officials of the sect, this will be subsequently mentioned in footnotes.

[108] In a tour of the different buildings of the sect in Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna on May 16, 1960 graciously guided by Mr. Baricanosa himself, this writer was brought to the assembly hall used for the weekly meetings of the members of the sect. At the farther end of the rectangular building this writer saw what appeared to be a conference room complete with upholstered chairs and a round table. Near this room is a similar room in which may be seen a bed and a harp. When this writer inquired who used the room, Mr. Baricanosa, without batting an eyelash, said in all seriousness: "Why, Dr. Rizal stays here to rest when he comes to talk to us. There are also times when he (Dr. Rizal) plays the harp." Mr. Baricanosa appears to this writer to be normal in all respects, except for a marked limp caused by arthritis.

two side altars in this church. On the side altar to the right is seen a crucifix, a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; on the side altar to the left are statues of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, St. Therese, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On the walls of the church are also to be seen the Stations of the Cross, in a manner no different from that of the Catholic Church.

Luis F. Fabregar,[109] otherwise known as the Supreme Bishop of the sect, was most helpful in acquainting this writer with the rituals and sacraments as practiced within the sect.[110]

Fabregar's life seems to be as colorful as the robes of a bishop (no different from those worn by Catholic bishops), complete with red sash and pectoral cross, which he has seen fit to wear. According to him, he was born in Concepcion, Romblon on June 21, 1914. He was born a Roman Catholic; in fact, as he stated in our interview, he studied for the Catholic priesthood in the Seminario de San Carlos de Cebu where he said he spent six and a half years studying philosophy among other subjects.[111] But his was a restless spirit and from Catholicism he joined the *Philippine (Aglipayan) Independent Church* of which he was a member for two months, and later the *Iglesia de Cristo* of which he was a member for two months, and later the *Iglesia Filipina Cristiana* which he also left after six months. In 1936 he founded his own sect the *Universa Dei Ecclesia* and for ten years (1936-1946) headed this sect. At one time, his [illegible] had a following of one thousand. In 1947, however, he joined the *Watawat ng Lahi* of which he is now the supreme bishop.[112]

The Sacraments

The sacraments of this sect, according to Fabregar, are "similar to the Catholic Church," a statement which, of course, must be taken with utmost caution. These are the following:

Baptism in which water is used by aspersion but is for infants only. Mature persons who are converted to the sect are not baptized. They are "sworn in" before God.[113]

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[109] On a calling card, given to this writer by Fabregar himself, the following appears: "Mons. Luis F. Fabregar/Obispo Supremo/Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi/Burol ng Lecheria/Calamba, Laguna/" However, on p. 32 of the *Dasalan* is an article written by Fr. Luis Fabragar (?) and on p. 38 of the same prayer book under the heading *Lupong Pamunuan* (Supreme Council) among the members of the council listed is Fr. Luis Fabrigar. In both instances, the *Fr.* prefixed to Fabregar's name may be taken to mean "Father." Fabragar and Fabrigar, although the latter spelling occurs in other places, are obviously misspelled.

In the interview with this writer in lecheria, Calamba, Laguna held on June 19, 1960, Fabregar evaded questions on his consecration as "bishop."

[110] The office of "supreme bishop" must not be confused with that of "president" of the sect. While the president, Mr. Baricanosa, takes charge of the administration of the sect, the "supreme bishop" is charged with the religious aspects like administering baptism, confirmation, training of priests, etc.

[111] This writer has written to the Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cebu inquiring about this aspect [illegible]bregar's life but up to now has received no reply.

[112] [illegible] interview with Fabregar, Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna, June 19, 1960. Aside from the Philippine Independent Church, the other sects are not registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

[113] In the baptismal ceremonies performed by Fabregar personally witnessed by this writer, the ritual was performed in Latin, a fact which may be partly explained by Fabregar's alleged background in a Catholic seminary. Later, this writer also saw a couple in their fifties who were "sworn in" before God.

Confirmation is performed by Fabregar and other bishops of the sect.

Matrimony is performed according to rites similar to those of the Catholic faith.

The same thing is true of extreme unction

There is no Holy Communion, as such. The sect believes that there is no transubstantiation at Mass. The communion is only a "symbol" of the last supper. In this connection, something must be mentioned about the 'mass" of the sect.

Although this writer did not actually witness a "mass" said by Fabregar, it may be presumed that Fabregar follows the Catholic mass. In support of this contention, it must be mentioned here that Fabregar uses a Roman Catholic missal (to be more specific, the *Missale Romanum* published by Benziger Brothers, Inc.) when he says mass.[114] However, other priests of the sect use a missal in the vernacular dialect of the particular region which they serve.

There is no confession in the sect.

Holy orders are administered by Fabregar to seminarians (presently, according to Fabregar, there are ten seminarians from the Bicol, Ilocos, and Bisayan regions being trained by Fabregar in the Calamba headquarters of the sect). These seminarians, Fabregar adds, are trained for a period of five years before they may be ordained. This may, however, be a little exaggerated; when asked for a course of study of the seminarians, Fabregar evaded the issue.[115] The ordination ceremonies, according to Fabregar are similar to those of the Aglipayan sect.

Hierarchy

The hierarchy of the sect may be divided into two sections: the officers of the organization who look after the temporal welfare of the sect; and the bishops and priests who look after the spiritual needs of their flock.

Of the first group, may be mentioned the following:[116] who form the Supreme Council (*Lupong Pamunuan*):

Jose Baricanosa, president
Crispin M. Penid, vice president
Sotero Macairog, general secretary
Gaudioso Parabuac, adviser
Mateo Alcuran, assistant adviser
Felicidad Lapitan, general treasurer
Eleuterio San Pedro, investigator

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[114] In an interview with Fabregar, Lecheria, June 19, 1960 Fabregar showed this writer this said missal and told him that it is the missal he uses when he "says Mass."

[115] In our interview with Baricanosa, Lecheria, May 16, 1960 this writer was told that the ministers (i.e. priests) are trained in Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna *for two years* before they are ordained. It is quite evident that the testimonies of these two officials of the sect do not tally with each other. As there is no other way of checking the facts for the present, this writer will just leave the reader to form his conclusions from the foregoing.

[116] *Dasalan*, p. 38.

Trinidad Banatin, member
Leandro Diasanta, member
Fr. Luis Fabrigar (?), member
Moises Canta, member
Herminigildo Ercia, member

Of the second group, may be mentioned:[117]

Luis Fabregar, supreme bishop
Eusebio Rodriguez, bishop of Legaspi
Aurelio Marvida, bishop of Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija
Felipe Marticio, bishop of Lupao, Nuva Ecija

To the above list of bishops, Fabregar added the following names:[118]

Aurelio Marvida, bishop of Tarlac (*vide supra*)
Eusebio Rodriguez, bishop of Bicol
Felipe Martecio, missionary bishop (*vide supra*)
Gonzalo Imperial, also bishop of Bicol

These bishops, Fabregar pointed out, have been named by the Board of Directors of the sect, and are in charge of the supervision of the thirty two priests of the sect.

Membership

As has already been pointed out by Baricanosa, the head of the sect, the Watawat ng Lahi can now count on about 100,000 members scattered all over the archipelago. If the banners carried by the members of the sect who participated in the Rizal Day celebrations in Calamba (June 19, 1960) are any indication, these members are to be found in Manila, Caloocan, Quezon City, Lupao, Guimba, and Caranglan, Nueva Ecija; Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Sta. Rosa, Laguna; Baler, Dipaculao, and Aurora, Quezon; San Mateo, and Callang, Isabela; Natividad, Asingan, Balungao, Binalonan, Bautista, Rosales, all in Pangasinan; Claveria, Cagayan; Daet, Camarines Norte; Albay; Camarines Sur; Visayas, and Mindanao.

Rizal's Place in the Cults in His Honor

In his monumental work on the use and development of magic, customs, social practices and religion among primitive peoples, Sir James G. Frazer,[119] has this to say:

"The notion of a man-god, or of a human being endowed with divine or supernatural powers, belongs essentially to that earlier period of religious history in which gods and men are still viewed as being of much the same order, and before they are divided by the impassable gulf which, to later thought, opens out between them."

[117] Interview with Baricanosa, May 16, 1960.
[118] Interview with Fabregar, June 19, 1960.
[119] James George Frazer. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. 1 Volume. Abridged Edition. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1955, p. 106.

"Strange, therefore, as may seem to us the idea of a god incarnate in human form," Sir James continues, "it has nothing very startling for early man, who sees in a man-god or a god-man only a higher degree of the same supernatural powers which he arrogates in perfect good faith to himself."[120]

The concept of the man-god is the natural outcome, the evolution, as it were, of the animistic beliefs of primitive peoples in the course of their socio-religious development.

For instance, although the ancient Sumerians did not succeed in developing a very exalted religion, they nevertheless conceived of their gods as being anthropomorphic. They believed in a number of gods and goddesses, each a distinct personality with human attributes.[121]

Even a cursory study of the Homeric gods would yield the fact that the ancient Greek looked up to his gods as magnified human beings. As it were, the Greek endowed these gods and goddesses "with attributes similar to his own --- with human bodies and human weaknesses and wants. He imagined the great company of divinities as frequently quarreling with one another, needing food and sleep, mingling freely with men..."[122]

It cannot be denied that the Jewish religion may be considered more perfect than the two religions mentioned above. As such, it may be understood why students of comparative religions would expect the Judaic concept of God (Jehovah or Jahweh) to have been more perfect; i.e. that God is pure spirit. And yet during "the time of Moses and for two or three centuries thereafter Yahweh was a somewhat peculiar deity. He was conceived almost exclusively in anthropomorphic terms. He possessed a physical body, to say nothing of the emotional qualities of man."[123]

From the foregoing, it can clearly be seen that anthropomorphism or the attribution of human form, or the character or qualities of humanity, to objects believed to be above humanity in the scale of being, and in particular to God or the gods[124] is as old as humanity itself.

As has already been shown in the accounts of some of the cults in his honor, Rizal is considered a god, endowed with divine qualities and powers. To be able to study this phase of Philippine religious movements better, however, it might be necessary to view it from the background of the religious movements in the Philippines in the distant past, however brief this view might be. As such, it may not be too difficult to see that, in the apotheosis of Rizal, a thread runs all the way from pre-Magellanic Philippines even to the Philippines of today, more specifically to the simple folks who believe Rizal to be a god.

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[120] *Loc. cit.*

[121] Edward McNall Burns, Western Civilizations Their History and Their Culture. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 3rd Edition , c1949 p. 49.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[124] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, II. Chicago, London, Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1957. p. 59.

Historians who have studied Philippine religious movements with special emphasis on the pre-Magellanic are agreed that the ancient Filipino, except if he was converted to Islamism before the coming of the Spaniards, professed animistic beliefs. We are told, for instance, that the pre-Hispanic Filipino "found gods in plants, in birds, in quadrupeds, in cliffs, in caves, and in the reefs of the sea."[125]

That the ancient Filipino also worshiped his dead ancestors has also been shown many times before. Perhaps it might not be stretching the imagination too far to say that this must have been the origin of his anthropomorphic beliefs. In worshiping his ancestors as some kind of gods, he must have given them qualities of the divinity, and in due time the concept of the man-god would emerge.

It may be presumed that with the more than three centuries of Spanish rule and with the subsequent spread of Catholicism by dedicated Spanish missionaries, these animistic beliefs would be erased completely and replaced by the Catholic faith. And yet in 1905, the scholar T. H. Pardo de Tavera could still say: "All of their ancient fears of the mysterious and occult powers which were supposed to bring ill health or misfortune, to reward with victories or punish with defeats, were preserved by these people (i.e. the Filipinos).[126]

Half a century later and with the widespread education of the country, one ...ld suppose that these beliefs had been finally eradicated. And yet as late as 1959, in bewailing the fact that education and religious instruction had been denied to the mountain peoples, and by extension, those who live in far-flung areas, Fr. Richard Arens, S.V.D., has implied that due to lack of education and religious instruction, traces of animistic beliefs still remain, especially among the uneducated classes.[127]

These simple souls, by nature credulous, timid, and easily led, to use the words of Pardo de Tavera, do not seem to have completely forgotten their beliefs in animism, or in a kind of anthropomorphism, as may be specifically shown in those who believe Rizal to be a god.

The belief of these sects that Rizal is a god is expressed in various ways. However, it would seem that this may be more effectively shown in the prayers directed to Rizal in his capacity as a god, and in the hymns sung in his honor.

The following excerpt of prayers of the followers of *Bathalismo* (*Inang Mahiwaga, Inc.*) may illustrate this point.

> Receive, Oh God, the sacrifice which we are offering to Your Majesty, in honor of Our Father Rizal, the Christ of the Tagalog region.[128]

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[125] Paper XX, "Religion" in Report of the Philippine Commission to the President, Vol. IV. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901, p. 95.

[126] ...nsus of the Philippine Islands. Vol. I: *Geography, History and Population*. Washington: United States Bureau o... ...e Census. 1905. p. 335.

[127] Richard Arens, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

[128] The Tagalog text: "Tangaggpin mo (O Bathala) ang sacripisio na nakagagaling na alay na inihahandog namin sa iyong Kadakilaan sa karangalan ng pangalan ng Ama naming Rizal na Cristo sa Katagalugan."

or still another excerpt from another prayer of the same sect:

> ...Rizal is the Christ of the Tagalog region. He is the Lord of the whole world. He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Because in Him is given by the Holy Bible the Spirit of God Almighty.[129]

Not all the sects studied have hymns exalting the divinity of Rizal. However, the followers of the *Adarnista* sect sing the following hymn in honor of Rizal during their religious service:

> Oh Father Creator of ours
> Who is in Calamba
> My heart do I give to You
> Your name is honored.[130]

The following is another portion of the same hymn:

> Dr. Rizal is god and man
> The most learned physician
> He is the god who rules
> He is king of all the world.[131]

In these lines may be summed up the beliefs of these sects: that Rizal is a god, the creator of the world, the king of kings, the lord of lords.

However, a closer scrutiny of these beliefs is in order.

Rizal is the "Christ," the "Son of Bathala" in the same manner that most Christian religions believe that Christ is the "Son of God" (*Sambahang Rizal*). Rizal is true god and true man. (*Adarnista* and *Bathalismo*) Or to phrase it differently, Jesus Christ is embodied in Dr. Rizal and hence, Dr. Rizal is at once a god and a man (*Watawat ng Lahi*). He is the reincarnation of Christ. Rizal, therefore, is god. (*Bathalismo*) Or again, to put it differently, Rizal is god: he is the second Christ. (*Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*)

And yet although all the sects profess the belief that Rizal is god, they never seem to bother to prove their claims. No authority is invoked, no passage from the Bible or from any other sources quoted to support the claim that Rizal is a god. Their idea of God is vague indeed and decidedly confusing. This confusion is further augmented by the notions of the sects about the Divine Persons. The *Watawat ng Lahi*

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[129] ... ang Cristo ng Katagalugan ay si Dr. Jose Rizal. Ang Panginoon ng lahat dito sa Sanglibutan. Hari ng mga Hari, Panginoon ng mga Panginoon. Sapagkat siya ang pinagkalooban ng banal na Tipan ng espiritu Santong Bathalang Maykapangyarihan.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that the followers of *Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga, Inc.)* are not the only ones who have found basis for comparing Rizal with Christ. Scholars like Rafael Palma and Salvador F. Lopez and religious leaders like Gregorio Aglipay have, at various times, also made this same comparison. *Vide* our study, *The Canonization of Rizal*, already cited.

[130] The Iloko text: "Oh ama mi nga namarsua/ nga adda sadi Calamba/ toy pusoc yawatco kenca/ nagan mot dayawenda/"

[131] The Iloko text: "Dios ken tao ni Dr. Rizal/ mangagas a casiriban/ Iso ti Dios nga agturay/ nga ari ti sangalubongan/"

would seem to profess a belief, however unorthodox, of some kind of Trinity. This sect teaches that the power of God the Father was given to Moses; the power of the Son, given to Jesus Christ; and the power of the Holy Ghost, given to Dr. Jose Rizal. This claim is indeed confusing when one recalls the other belief of the same sect that Rizal is the reincarnation of Christ.

However, two other sects (the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina* and the *Adamista*) have gone even farther. These two sects teach the belief that there are four persons in one God! The *Adamista* doctrine is that there are four persons in God: the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Mother. This is certainly unorthodox, and is explained thus: God the Son had a Father: He certainly must have had a Mother and that is the Virgin Mary. Although the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina* also professes this same belief (i.e. there are four persons in on God) their explanation for the existence of God the Mother may be even more unorthodox than that of the *Adamista* sect. God the Mother, in the belief of the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*, is the Blessed Virgin Mary but it is the Blessed Virgin who is in heaven, not to be confused with the Blessed Virgin who was born on earth and who became the earthly Mother of Christ. There are two Blessed Virgins! However, it is evident here that these two sects did not show how Rizal would fit in into their doctrine of four persons in one God.

Be that as it may, at least one sect (*Sambahang Rizal*) taught that Rizal was ointed by Bathala to redeem his race and his people. Rizal, in the belief of this sect, offered up his life to save mankind. At this point, it may be well to ask: redeem his race from whom? This has not been explained by the sect. However, we may conjecture as to what form that redemption might possibly take by studying the other beliefs of the sects. The *Watawat ng Lahi* advances the following: If the third World War breaks out, numberless people will be killed by atomic weapons. But after the war, Dr. Rizal will appear to the new world, and he will lead the army of God. The *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*, on the other hand, adds that after the second coming of Christ, Rizal will be His successor and Rizal will do the functions of Christ. Again, what these functions will be is not made clear. At any rate, is this what is possibly meant when Rizal is said to have redeemed his people and his race?

All the sects studied also share the common belief that Rizal is not dead. For instance, *Bathalismo* teaches that Rizal was not killed when he was "supposedly" (?) shot at Bagumbayan in 1896. In the belief of this sect, Rizal before the execution, disguised himself as a Chinaman and took a boat for China, eluding the authorities. How Rizal could possibly have done this and how he later returned to his country are not explained although the *Watawat ng Lahi* assures us that Rizal is alive and is physically and materially present in the New Jerusalem which is presently hidden at the site between Mt. Makiling and Mt. Banahaw.

The last belief might have been the reason, among others, why the *Watawat ng Lahi* insists that it was Rizal who founded this sect. The *Watawat ng Lahi* also teaches that it is the voice of Rizal which commands the officials and the members what to do: s is the voice of Rizal, the sect affirms, that speaks to the members in the weekly meetings at Lecheria, Calamba, Laguna. Again, this sect also states that its teachings are based on the commands of Moses, Jesus Christ, and the teachings of Dr. Rizal culled from his writings, a characteristic which it holds in common with the defunct

Sambahang Rizal which considered Rizal's novels, the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *El Filibusterismo* as the "Bible" of the sect.

In short, Rizal's place in these sects may be summed up in the words of Venancio P. Wagan, founder of the *Bathalismo* sect, when he said: "Without any reservation whatsoever, we say that the said Dr. Jose Rizal of the Philippines is the all powerful Bathala (i.e. God) of this world."

Findings and Conclusion

The concept of the man-god is as old as humanity itself and is common among primitive peoples even to this day. The ancient Sumerians and the Greeks, and even the Jews at the time of Moses, envisioned gods who were, we might say, magnified human beings, with human bodies, and human wants and needs.

Thus, it may be said that the belief that Rizal is a god may be considered as an extension of the anthropomorphic belief of the ancient Filipinos. In spite of the more than three centuries of Catholicism in the country, fears of mysterious and occult powers, especially among the poor unlettered folk, have remained. The concept of the man-god, on the other hand, might have originated from the ancestor worship of the ancient Filipinos. It seems clear from our study that this idea has remained in our midst, especially among the illiterate peasants living in mountain areas and far-flung barrios which education, secular and religious, has not yet reached, or at least, affected.

These sects which consider Rizal as a god are centered, as may be expected, in rural areas where poor peasant folk live. Most of their members, we may be sure, were barely, if ever, instructed in the religion of their forefathers, and, as such, seem to have identified religion with superstition. Indeed, the many superstitious beliefs that characterize these sects may have appealed to their imagination and must have been greatly instrumental in winning them over to these sects.

Most leaders of the sects also come from the peasant class and have had the minimum of schooling, if any at all. There are, however, other leaders who profess to have come from the "educated" class. For instance, Jose B. Baricanosa, present head of the *Watawat ng Lahi*, claims to be a B.S. graduate from a Chicago college, while among other leaders, Alfredo Benedicto is a lawyer, and Crispin M. Penid was formerly a college student in a Manila university.

All the sects studied appeal to the sense of patriotism. As has been seen, these sects consider love of country and reverence for the national heroes as among their most important principles. In the intent to preach this "doctrine," however, at least one sect (i.e. *Bathalismo*) has included among its principal tenets the belief that the Philippines is for Filipinos only. There is here the subtle, if effective, way to preach hatred against the foreigners. The reason for this may not be too hard to seek. Even though their leaders profess love for fellowmen (which doubtless includes foreigners, too) still they would identify the Catholic Church with the "whites." In some of their pronouncements, many leaders of the sects still find it convenient to harp on what they call the abuses of the Spanish friars, a thing of the distant past. Thus, in preaching against the foreigners, it is felt that they also preach against the Catholic

Church which is considered a common enemy. This line has also been followed by the early Aglipayan Church and owing to the peculiar conditions at the church's establishment it greatly helped attract many members. As subsequent events turned out, however, this appeal to the patriotic sense eventually subsided and did not prevent members of the Aglipayan sect from drifting away to other religions. It may be safe to predict here that given time, this may yet hold true for the sects in honor of Rizal.

Closely allied to the appeal to the patriotic sense is what may be considered the principal doctrine of these sects. As has been noted in the preceding division of this paper, these sects profess the belief that Rizal is a god, that he is the savior of his race and of his people, that he did not die, and that he is present everywhere in the same manner that God is present everywhere.

In attributing divinity and, consequently, divine powers to Rizal, these sects went much farther than the Aglipayan Church which only canonized Rizal about sixty years ago. The feeling of identification, as psychologists would tell us, is very strong in individuals. Did the founders of these sects, perhaps, believe that in the apotheosis of Rizal, many would be attracted to these sects, if only for a subconscious identification with one of their race, one who would embody all the aspirations, and hopes of the Filipino people?

The remark of Julita Reyes-Sta. Romana in her study of the *Iglesia Ni Kristo* may be pertinent here.

> "What could be more interesting, appealing and elating to the common *tao* than to know and to believe that a Filipino is an angel (i.e. Felix Manalo, founder of this sect, is considered an angel by his followers) sent by God," Mrs. Sta. Romana says. "There has never been a Filipino saint or angel, and here comes a man bold and audacious enough to claim that he is an angel in human form. Who would not welcome such an assumption for a change?... To the common *tao* this is good enough."

Indeed if the claim that a Filipino is an angel is that interesting, appealing, and elating to the common *tao* member of the *Iglesia Ni Kristo* who, needless to state, would certainly welcome such an assumption for a change, one can well imagine the great impact of the belief that Rizal is a god has on the poor unlettered members of these sects in Rizal's honor.

Closely linked to the apotheosis of Rizal are the elements of mystery that are common to all these sects. There is in the *Watawat ng Lahi* and *Bathalismo*, for instance, the belief in the so-called "voices" which speak to the members and instruct them in their obligations and duties as members. This element may also be seen in the account about Obispa (!) Maria Loreta V. Garcia, the "Mysterious Mother" (*Inang Mahiwaga*) of the *Bathalismo* sect, who was supposed to have been born under the most mysterious and fantastic conditions imaginable. Again, this same element is to be seen in the *Adarnista* belief that their foundress, Candida Balantac, is endowed with supernatural powers. Were these beliefs included to attract the poor unlettered folk who would mistake superstition for religion?

There is also the intent of the sects to merge religious practices with traditional Catholic practices. That the Filipino is at heart a religious person easily moved by picturesque rituals and ceremonies has been pointed out many times before. By way of parenthesis, when the late founder of the Aglipayan church wanted to do away with the Mass and other rituals borrowed from the Catholic Church, many of his leaders opposed his plan alleging that these rituals and ceremonies were part of the religious experience of the Filipino and doing away with them would certainly drive many members away from the sect. And contrary to the intentions of Aglipay, his sect continued these Catholic ceremonies, as indeed it still does today. Were the founders of the sects under study impressed by this same fact when they found it expedient to include in their rituals, ceremonies that are Catholic in origin? Obviously so, for, indeed, the members accustomed to such ceremonies for years would certainly find something lacking if such ceremonies should be done away with. And if this is done, the ceremonies would lose their meaning to the poor unlettered folk who might then say that these sects are not "churches" after all and most possibly would not be attracted to them. Except the *Iglesia Sagrada Filifina*, all the other sects have found these ceremonies and rituals necessary in their set-up.

This intent to merge weird religious practices with traditional Catholicism is also manifested in other ways. In the chapel of the *Adarnistas* and in the church of the *Watawat ng Lahi* are prominently displayed statues of the Blessed Virgin and of other Catholic saints side by side with a statue of Rizal and pictures of other Philippine heroes. This intent is also seen in the weird prayers said by members of these sects, prayers with a hodge-podge of Latin, Hebrew, Tagalog, and Iloko, prayers which have assumed magical proportions, no different from the incantations of primitive religions. For instance, some of these prayers are recommended to ward off typhoons, earthquakes, and evil spirits.

There is also the tendency for members of these sects to retreat to heavily wooded areas, forests, and mountains. Their preoccupation with the existence of the New Jerusalem in the Philippines is also very evident. To give a sense of immediacy, some of these sects have found it imperative to talk to their followers about the imminence of a nuclear war, and that, as members of these sects, they by their implicit faith would be among the few who would be saved in the event of such a war. Psychological reasons may perhaps be advanced to explain this characteristic. Is this tendency to retreat to mountains, far from bustling city or progressive town, a reaction against a materialism which these sects have obviously not approved of? Or is it symbolic of the collective feeling of the members' insecurity and the uncertainty of the times?

As a natural consequence of the tendency cited above is the evidence of a communism akin to the communism practiced by the early Christians. The *Adarnistas*, among others, may be said to be living a community life in Olivete, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija. Again, the intent of the *Watawat ng Lahi* to have the members live on Lecheria Hill in Calamba may also be indicative of this tendency. However, the belief of *Bathalismo*, i.e. "There are no rich or poor in this world; and every one shall be equal" may not be in accordance with the brand of communism just mentioned; this seems close to the Marxist theory of classless society. However, this line of thought must be mentioned with utmost caution.

What would pass for the "theology" of these sects is confused, and unsystematized. It is actually a potpourri of various religious, political, and what may even be called, patriotic, beliefs. Religious beliefs like "There are four persons in God: the Father, the Mother, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" are forced on the members without any attempt to explain this belief except for a scanty: "God the Son had a Father, He certainly must have had a Mother." However, it would seem that the poor peasant members do not care much about the theology preached. If the members of the *Watawat ng Lahi* interviewed by this writer are any indication, some members are not even aware of the principal belief that these sects are supposed to profess, i.e. that Rizal is a god.

At this point it may be prudent to presume that the members joined these sects in good faith. It is interesting to note that these sects have flourished in places inaccessible to priests and where, doubtless, a dismal ignorance of the Catholic faith has proven to be a fertile ground for them to thrive.

It must also be stated that the credulity of these simple folk is such that they may easily be swayed to beliefs which may in time assume the proportions of fanaticism. One can well imagine what unscrupulous leaders can do with such a fanatical following. Recent developments in Philippine history have shown, as in the case of the "colorums" and the "pulahanes," that such religious fanaticism may even lead to disastrous results. Fortunately, up to the present time, there has been no instance, to the knowledge of this writer, when leaders and followers of the sects studied have taken part in uprisings against the government.

The main problem would not be to suppress such movements as the religious sects we have studied; for indeed to do so would be considered a curtailment of the freedom of worship as is provided for by the Philippine constitution. There should be the move to help such people living in mountain barrios and far-flung places, however, who are primarily the targets of these religious movements. Such help could be in the form of education, not only in its secular aspects, but what is perhaps even more important, in its religious phases.

We fully agree with Fr. Richard Arens when he says: "The government, whose concern ought to be the welfare of the people, should be aware of this need. And it is hoped that the time is not so far off when the public school teacher who is generally the only well-educated person in the mountain barrios will be permitted to give religious instruction. For a predominantly Catholic nation that should be no difficulty; for minority groups special arrangements could be made."[132]

How long would these sects survive? Already, at least one sect (the *Sambahang Rizal*) is now defunct, and there seems to be no indication to show that it will be revived. Another sect (the *Adamista*) has already divided into two factions. Division into splinter sects may indeed contribute to their eventual dissolution. Certainly the number of the members of these sects may still not have reached such proportions as to cause alarm, but we may be sure that in places where poor, unlettered folk, prone to superstition, are found these sects would surely thrive.

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[132] Arens, *op. cit*, pp. 368-369.